

Confucius Teachings On Building A Happy Life (18)

- a foundation for Mahayana Buddhism practice

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Children Emulating the Saints and Sages

Good morning everyone! Greetings to you all! Yesterday, we started the second chapter on "Practicing Fraternity Outside the Home." We have mentioned, "The older children should be friendly and the younger ones should be respectful; when siblings get along harmoniously, filial piety already exists in their actions." As the proverb says, "When a family lives in harmony, myriad things are bound to be prosperous." When siblings are united in heart, even the ochre earth will turn into gold. It is true that when the family atmosphere is harmonious, the family tradition and family member's careers will surely reach their pinnacles.

After listening to the stories of the ancient saints and sages, many children immediately wanted to follow the saint's examples after they got home. Having learned that Kong Rong gave the bigger pear to his older brother, the children started to practice and emulate Kong Rong. An older sister became so generous that she gave the only pear left to her younger brother. The younger brother happily took one big bite after another. When he had eaten more than half of the pear, the sister couldn't resist her temptation and snatched the pear back from her brother. When their mother saw this, she then gave a call to their teacher. This is a very good opportunity for cooperation between teachers and parents. Because it is impossible for children to practice every teaching in the classics at one go, they still need long term guidance from their teachers and parents.

Love Between Brothers Saves Them from Bandits

The next day, the teacher told the class a story. During the Han dynasty, there were two siblings: the older brother was named Zhao Xiao and the younger one was Zhao Li. Unfortunately, Zhao Li was kidnapped by bandits. When the older brother learned about it, he immediately went to search for the bandits' camp. As he rushed straight to the bandits' camp, he saw that the bandits were very hungry and were already prepared to kill and eat his brother. When Zhao Xiao saw this, he was so anxious that he dashed in front of the bandits and said, "My brother is sick and skinny, please don't eat him. You can eat me because I am fatter and healthier."

When Zhao Li heard this, he also became very nervous and quickly pushed his brother away and said to the bandits, "Since it is my fate to be caught by you, you should eat me. You must not hurt my brother." The two brothers were fighting to die for each other. At this time, the bandits were deeply moved by them and released Zhao Li.

The teacher then said, "So, children, what were Zhao Xiao and Zhao Li even willing to sacrifice for each other?" Even their own lives. Can we quarrel with our siblings just for an apple or a pear? We should act according to the spirit of the ancient saints and sages. When the emperor learned about the spirit of Zhao Xiao and Zhao Li willing to sacrifice their lives for each other, the emperor appointed them as officials to govern the people. So, they were blessed with good fortune in the end.

Why did the emperor want to appoint them as officials? You see, siblings who love each other would surely be filial to their parents. Such virtuous people would definitely love and care for the people when they become officials. Because, "When one was taught to be filial to his parents, he will respect all parents of other people; when one was taught to be fraternal, he will also respect all siblings of other people."

So, we used this "teaching moment" to guide and educate children. Of course, when children have excellent performance, we must also acknowledge their efforts.

A Student Who Gave Away His New Slippers

There was another child whose classmate's slippers had worn out. As his own slippers were already slightly spoiled, he had replaced them with new ones. But he was reluctant to throw away his old slippers and placed them under his bed. Perhaps he had learned this phrase in *Dizigui*, "I will not ignore old friends (or stuff) and only take delight in new ones." So, he still had feelings for his old slippers and didn't throw them away, but put them under his bed.

Seeing the child's slippers were worn out and could not be worn anymore, the teacher said to him, "Go get your old slippers and give them to your classmate." Is this an act of helping the classmate? Yes! Otherwise, his classmate would have no slippers to wear during the winter's chill.

Later, the teachers found this student still wearing the old slippers and the new slippers were surprisingly on his classmate's feet. All of us adults had been given a lesson! You see, he had truly practiced this teaching in *Dizigui*, "When I do not value wealth much, how can there be resentment?" His classmate must have sensed that he took great care of others.

So, we encouraged this child right away, saying that he is indeed a good student of Confucius. Then, we also gave him further expectations, urging him to set a good example for his classmates in the future since he was the eldest in the class. When we acknowledge our children, we must not forget to remind them to step up the position of their aspiration.

So, praising children is also a big subject to learn. We often hear this phrase, "Being bright at an early age does not necessarily mean being talented when grown up." It is very strange, why does a person have such great abilities when young but may not necessarily have a good development when he grows up? This is a result, what is the reason? We can't just stop to ponder at the result, for it will leave us unclear about the truth. My friends, what do you think of this situation?

There is no role model for them to emulate. (*Audience reply)

This is a very important reason; we should seriously deliberate this issue.

Setting a Firm Aspiration Is the Cornerstone of Learning

A father said, "When my son was two years old, I thought he could become a national leader. When he was in junior high school, I thought it would not be too bad if he could just make it to college. When he entered senior high school, I thought it would be good enough for him to secure a job in the future." Why was there such a huge difference?! But, when the father's expectation of his son became lower and lower, would his son have a rosy future? No! He would not. So, when elders didn't set a good example for him, he would not have an aspiration. He would slowly become idle and feel bored with his life.

That is why at the beginning of our lessons, we emphasize that "setting a firm aspiration is the cornerstone of learning." Besides, what is the purpose of learning to acquire abilities? In this regard, we must make a cautious start! What is the true purpose for children to cultivate abilities? Why must they learn to acquire skills? We have mentioned in the beginning that the purpose of studying is to become saints and sages, but today people study purely for the reason of making money. Since they have set the wrong objective, is it possible to reap good results? So, there must be a correct guiding concept from the beginning.

Why were they outstanding when they were young but not talented in the end? Because many of their skills were used to show off. That is why *Dizigui* teaches us, "I should never show off in front of elders." Some children who have learned English or some skills, and their elders take them everywhere to show off, how would this make them feel?

"You see, all elders are clapping for me. Some even said to me: we should learn from you, you are awesome!" After listening to many words of praise, they would not be able to listen to others' suggestions. Therefore, even when praising others, we must use our sense of rationality and wisdom. I gained this understanding through my personal experience as well as others' cases, and it is also attested by the classics.

Guarding Against Arrogance, Indulgence, Complacency, and Excessiveness

On the first page in the scroll of *Qu Li of The Book of Rites*, it states, "One should never let his arrogance grow, should never indulge in desires, should never be complacent with his aspiration, and should never allow pleasure to be excessive." Let's take a look if people today violate these four principles.

So long as people give rise to a mind of arrogance, there is no way for them to accept others' teachings, thus it will be very difficult for them to make further progress. If children are arrogant when they are young, it will be very difficult for them to have great accomplishments in life. Therefore, "Being bright at an early age does not necessarily mean being talented when grown up." If children become arrogant due to some special talents, that will be very troubling. Because, to accomplish knowledge and wisdom lies in being able to accept teachings and in having a humble attitude. Only then would they know that "there is always someone better than us."

Secondly, we should not indulge ourselves in desires. The indulgence in material pleasure will ruin one's aspiration. Aren't there many truthful examples in front of us?

Thirdly, "one should not be complacent with his aspiration." Yet children today are worse than that, they do not have any aspiration, leading them to always goof around and feel bored with life. So, we should set a lofty and far aspiration, our lives will then be fulfilling because we will then always think of improving ourselves to serve society and others.

Lastly, we should not allow pleasures to be excessive, as extreme joy will turn into sorrow. When a child doesn't know how to be self-disciplined from a young age and always

plays without restraint, he will increase the possibility of harming his own health or exposing himself to great danger. My friends, our ancestors recorded their teachings in the scriptural texts thousands of years ago. Our ancestors had fulfilled their responsibilities to us, we must not disgrace them.

Living Amidst Applause

Being the eldest grandson, I received a lot of praise since I was young. So, whenever I did something, what was my motive?

Getting applause! (*An audience replies)

How do you know?! I would see whether others were aware of what I was doing, so it turned out that I had been living amidst applause.

Once when I was in my senior year of college, an elder happily said to me, after listening to my lecture, "You are really someone who lives amidst others' applause!" He was giving me an acknowledgement, but his words suddenly put me in deep reflection: would I still do it if there was no applause? No! I would not!

But surprisingly, there is no applause for many extremely important matters in life. When a person often gets a lot of praise, he would definitely be very concerned about gains and losses. With this kind of life one will never be happy and at ease.

I began to rectify myself because I had been listening to too much praise in the past, and as a result, I would really feel very uneasy when I heard a word of criticism. So, I must always recite this phrase in *Dizigui*, "If compliments make me apprehensive and criticisms make me joyful, upright and forgiving people will gradually come close to me."

Indeed, we only have a pair of eyes and ears. How much can we see and hear? When we have a mind of humility, we have no idea how many more pairs of eyes are helping us to see the road in front of us, and how many more pairs of ears are helping us to listen to many messages as well as pointing out our shortcomings. So, the thing that we should nurture in our children is humility, not complacency. When we praise our children, we must praise their virtuous conduct, not their abilities and talents. As praising one's talent and ability for a period of time would surely lead to problems.

Useless and Harmful Praise

What else do parents also praise? Wow! How pretty you are! What is the point of praising one's beauty? Would saying that be of any help to her? You should say, "What a good temperament you have, are you reading *Dizigui* everyday? Is it because you have always been very courteous to elders? So, you are able to 'reflect your inner sincerity to your outward appearance'." You can take this opportunity to review the classical texts with her.

Too many children, such as little girls, are praised by adults, saying, "How could one person look so pretty! Look at her eyes, look at her nose!" If this little girl was praised for two or three years, what would happen? She would surely bring one thing with her every day.

A mirror! (*Audience reply)

How do you know?!

There were a pair of siblings who came to a kindergarten; both the older sister and younger brother were very beautiful. But the beauty of a little girl usually attracts the elders

more. So, everyone seeing her would keep praising her beauty. During the class, this little girl would take out a mirror to take a glance at herself. As a result, her learning performance was far behind that of her brother. Because she only paid attention to her appearance and was not attentive in class. She was often concerned about whether or not others were eyeing her. Such children will easily head towards a life of vanity in the future. So, do not praise children's appearances, neither should we often praise their abilities and talents. Instead, we should praise their virtues.

How to Correctly Praise Ability and Talent

And even if we praise their abilities and talents, we must also lead them to understand the purpose of having talents. For example, what is the purpose of being very talented in playing the zither? What is the purpose? Is it to perform for others and make them feel that I am so great? That is wrong! If we were to lead children in this way, their zither playing would definitely run into a bottleneck. On the other hand we could guide them by saying, "There is nothing better than music to transform the prevailing customs and reform society." (*A quote from *The Classic of Filial Piety*)

This means that music can improve people's temperament and the value and vibe of the entire society. So, when you aspire to learn playing the zither with utmost sincerity, you can surely perform music that will benefit the public." When children have such a goal, their entire mentality would be completely different. When we commend children's virtues, for example, "You are so filial to your parents," they will do it more vigorously because filial piety corresponds with their self-nature. This will not have any side-effect. So, our praise must accord with moral character. Where can we find the standard of moral character? Correct! In *Dizigui!*

"Delve deeply into one subject", this one subject is to allow us to grasp the essence of moral character. So, my friends, we must familiarize ourselves with the text of *Dizigui*. Listen, I emphasize "familiarize yourself with it!" For elders, there is pressure to memorize the text, but you should at least be familiar with it.

A Mother Teaches Her Daughter the True Reason for Studying

There was a mother who brought her little daughter to go shopping. They happened to bump into a friend. The friend asked the little girl, "Why have you not started school yet?"

Being young still, the little girl asked her mother, "Mommy, what is school for?"

This elder told the girl at once, "School can make one earn big money."

Well, it is important "to make a cautious start." What should you do if you were this mother? Nowadays, such a view of value accounts for a large proportion. The mother immediately took the opportunity to signal to her friend not to continue talking.

Then she said to her daughter, "Foremost, studying allows us to acquire skills and abilities. With the skills and abilities, we can then help others and make contributions to society."

We must remember that "society and nation are an entity where everyone must help each other." When children know that there must be mutual help in society, how will they

treat other people from all walks of life once they form this attitude? They will show their respect and gratitude.

But if their purpose of acquiring skills is to earn big money, what will be their standard to view people of every walk of life in the future? With the amount of the money! They will disdain people of many fields. So, seeking wisdom and knowledge lies in the intention that is harbored in one's mind. As long as one's intention is deviated, one will move away from morality and wisdom. So, the mother immediately led her daughter to understand that studying is to acquire abilities to help others.

But "learning ability" is too abstract for a little child to understand. Since the mother and daughter had just bought some steamed buns from the supermarket, the mother said to the daughter, "That uncle (*A courteous way to address a male elder in Chinese culture.) who has skills of making buns, so he can make buns for us to eat. We should be thankful to him."

The mother continued, "But to express our gratitude, can we give the uncle your toy bear or give him your little car? The uncle may not need them. So, we can thank the uncle by giving him some money that he can use to buy his necessities."

Through this opportunity, the mother guided her daughter to understand that the purpose of learning is to improve our skills to serve others. When children have such an attitude, they will not easily become arrogant.

Don't Praise Others Too Much on First Acquaintance

I once met a new acquaintance in his twenties; when I first saw him, he was taller than me and more handsome than me, plus he had been studying saints' and sages' classics, so I was very excited to meet him. Since he had started learning the classics earlier than me, I was very happy for him and started praising him.

I praised him, "This is so rare to come by!" I kept praising him. Can we praise a person excessively on first acquaintance? No! We must not! We must be prudent with our speech! Yet, I had not done the right thing. As I could not contain my joy, I heaped praises on him.

Later, after over a week of being together, I observed that he had done something that was not very appropriate. As he was much younger than me and I regarded myself as his big brother, I then "made my expression pleasant and softened my voice" to talk to him. As soon as I voiced my words, I saw his facial expression change instantly. As I am also a highly sensitive person, I immediately slammed on the brakes after exhorting him halfway. Because, if he could not accept my exhortation and the atmosphere became tense, it would not be easy to communicate with him next time. From this incident, I also came to understand that I must praise people according to their virtues, otherwise people will truly get lost amidst others' praise.

That's why we praised the student who was willing to spare his new slippers for his classmate. We also gave him further expectations by encouraging him to be a role model of virtue to everyone in the future.

Why were the oldest siblings in the past exceptionally outstanding and responsible? Why? Because from a young age, their parents expected them to understand that parents work very hard, very toilsome, so they must take good care of younger siblings at home. You see, when children are given expectations and responsibilities, their abilities will naturally develop very fast. So, in the process of educating children, there are many opportunities that we can grab to use these phrases to guide them.

The Highest Learning Is Being Considerate of Others

Yesterday we mentioned the next phrase, "Whether drinking, eating, sitting, or walking, I should let the older ones go first, then the younger ones follow behind." In fact, this etiquette, though a small matter in life, its most important purpose is to develop children's respectful mind. Genuine wisdom and knowledge lies in one's intentions.

There is such a saying, "The highest learning is being considerate of others." With this spirit, it can then be called "the highest learning." Mr. Fan Zhongyan's* eldest son was named Fan Chunren. (*A famous statesman of the Song Dynasty, left his celebrated remarks and spirit through history, "Be the first to worry about world affairs and the last to enjoy happiness.")

Chinese parents care for their children in every detail, even the given names were to educate the child. For the Chinese, what is the purpose of giving a name to children? They give their children expectations through their names, so that the children can remind themselves at all times. So, Fan Zhongyan named his son Chunren* (*純仁, it means "pure benevolence"), what was his expectation for his son? He was hoping that his son could always uphold a benevolent and compassionate heart.

Let's take a look at this character of "benevolence", 仁. It is a compound ideograph character which comprises the left radical of "man"(人) and the right radical of "two"(二). What does this mean? Two people! Who are these two people? When we think of ourselves, we must also think of others. So, Confucius said, "Don't do to others what you don't wish to be done upon you." "Treat others the way you wish to be treated." "Establish others if you wish to establish yourself; help others to accomplish wisdom if you wish to accomplish your own wisdom." Since young, if children knew what their father's expectation of them was, naturally they would always encourage and urge themselves to go in this direction.

Shared Mindset of Father and Son

As a matter of fact, Fan Chunren also didn't fail his father's expectation. Once, Fan Zhongyan told his son Fan Chunren, "I have 500 buckets of wheat. You need to ship them from the capital city of Kaifeng, Henan province, back to our hometown, Jiangsu province." Halfway through the journey, Fan Chunren bumped into an old friend of his father, who told Chunren about his own family situation. This elder had no money to bury his own departed parents and his daughters had not yet yet married; he was in dire straits. Upon hearing this, Fan Chunren immediately sold the 500 buckets of wheat and gave the money to this elder. But the money was still insufficient! What should we do when helping others? "To help one to attain Buddhahood, we must help him to reach the Western Pure Land." This implies that we must spare no effort to help them throughout to the end. So, he sold the boat that was used to ship the wheat right away, only then did he get enough money to help this elder.

After handling this matter, he returned to the capital city to see his father. He sat down with his father and reported the whole incident of meeting his father's old friend midway. When he told his father of his decision to sell the wheat to help the elder and found that the money was still insufficient, Fan Zhongyan raised his head and said to his son, "Then you should sell the boat too." Chunren said, "Yes father, I have sold the boat." Look, the father and son shared the same mindsets, that is why their family morality could last

eternally. By upholding pure benevolence, did the Fan family suffer any losses? No, they did not suffer any disadvantages, they have gained great blessings instead.

Likewise, my father gave me this name also expecting me to be well-mannered and to have a sense of mission to carry on courtesy to the future generations, like the sun shining its light on the earth. In this way, I would then not disappoint my father having given me this name.

The crux of seeking wisdom and knowledge is to foster a pure intention and to develop a benevolent and respectful mind. So, why do people say that learning can change our temperament? Where does the change start? From our mind.

Take the example of *Dizigui*; it teaches us to let the elders go first whether we are drinking, eating, sitting, or walking, and when the elders are standing, the younger ones must not sit until told to do so. When children study the classical texts, they will gradually put them into practice. And when they implement the teachings, their behavior will slowly be internalized and become their intention. Their respectful mind will be increasingly sturdy. When their respectful mind becomes sturdy, this inner sincerity will naturally change their temperament. So, when children do not practice what they have learned, is it possible to see a change in their temperament? The effects will be quite limited. That is why "practicing what we have learned is the cornerstone of learning."

The Table Manners That Will Affect Children's Future

When drinking or eating, we must let the elders sit and eat first. We have a group of students in Shenzhen. They were not only taught by the teachers to let the elders eat first, they were also taught how to arrange the seats before sitting. The main seats must be reserved for the teachers, the students must not jump in and grab a seat. Is learning table manners important for children in their future? Yes, very important!

I once heard from a boss who needed to have some discussions with a client. Both of them brought their own employees along. He said that one of his employees sat on the main seat as soon as they entered the room. Everyone was stunned and did not know what to do. Since he is an adult, it would cause great embarrassment to tell him on the spot. The main seat is the one facing the entrance. Because, when the elders or senior officers sit there, they would be able to grasp the overall situation. Can you let the boss sit on the seat nearest to the door? Then he won't know who comes in. So, all the etiquette follows a natural condition which is very reasonable. When children have been taught to reserve the main seat for the teachers, they will not take the wrong seat and will be well-disciplined.

The teacher also said, "If there are stripes on the table, they cannot point to the main seat as this is disrespectful." Every bit of these is fostering their respectful mind and carefulness.

I was often not in the classroom because I have to travel around to give lectures. When I returned, I would have meals with the students. Once, they were turning the table as I sat down for the meal. I felt strange and asked, "Why are you turning the table?"

They said, "The stripes must not point towards Teacher Tsai as it is disrespectful." I was deeply moved upon seeing this. I believe that these children will maintain such a respectful mind for the rest of their lives. This is about "when drinking and eating" letting the elders go first.

When Sitting or Walking, Let the Elders Go First

Next, "when sitting and walking," we should also let the elders go first. There was a fourth-grader who followed his mother to visit their relatives. When they entered the house, his mother happened to be on the phone. He said to his mother, "Mother, take a seat."

His mother said, "You sit first."

He said to his mother again, "Mother, take a seat."

His mother felt it was very strange and said, "I told you to sit, you just sit! Why are you so tortuous?"

The child said, "Mom, if you don't sit down, I cannot sit." Because he was practicing this phrase in *Dizigui*. At this time, as parents and teachers, we must be sensitive; we must help him fulfill his wish of practicing filial piety and a respectful mind. Only then can he establish his moral character and cultivate Dao. His mother had finally gotten back her composure at that time. Actually, before learning *Dizigui*, who was the one that ate and sat first? The children! This is inverted! When it is against the norm, of course the children's behavior will also become topsy-turvy. Now, we must quickly rectify their bad manners.

When Getting on the Bus, Sit in the Back

"Letting the elders sit first" can also be extended to using public transportation, for example, we must line up nicely and must not rush to the fore. On the bus, other than yielding the seats to the elderly, pregnant women, children, and the frail, we should also move to the back, leaving the front seats for people who get on later. Do not pick the front seat when there are plenty of seats at the back, as this is not giving convenience to others. Because, if the passengers behind are elderly, is it nice to make them walk so far? So, we must always be considerate of the elderly and the passengers behind us.

My friends, do adults practice this now? You can pay attention and observe carefully. For example, when a group or company goes on a trip, those who got on the bus first would sit in the front seats, and those behind would have to sit at the back. We must practice respect and courteous concession at all times.

There was a school going on a tour and many male teachers were sitting in the front seats. One of the female teachers had learned *Dizigui*, but she couldn't point out their mistakes right away as adults are more concerned about their "face." If we tell an adult their faults directly, they will probably fly into a rage out of humiliation. So, even teachers should seriously learn *Dizigui*, otherwise their speech and behavior might go against what they teach.

Don't Sabotage Other's Wisdom Life

What would happen if the teachers' deeds were not consistent with education? They would fall into the nineteenth level of hell. There is such an anecdote: there was a doctor who treated his patients' life carelessly. The deity Yamaraja was enraged and sentenced him to the 18th layer down in hell. While he was in the underworld, he was very upset and called out, "I didn't do it on purpose; it was just an accident!" You see, he hadn't learned *Dizigui*, so

he didn't admit his mistakes. He didn't know that "If I correct my faults and do not repeat them, the faults will no longer exist." Had he given rise to a thought of repentance, he would have left the 18th level of hell. If he "tried to cover them up," he would be doubly guilty and have to stay there.

As he was stamping his feet angrily, suddenly, someone below him said, "Stop stamping! All your dust is falling on me."

He was startled and thought to himself, "Isn't the 18th level the lowest of hell? Why is there still someone below?" He said, "I was a doctor. I was sentenced to the 18th level because of being negligent in my work. What was your career and why are you in the 19th level?"

The person below him said, "I was a teacher!"

The doctor was sentenced to the 18th level because of ending someone's lifespan, but the teacher had sabotaged people's wisdom-life. Sentient beings' lifespan will come to an end, but their wisdom-life is everlasting. And if a teacher has correctly established his students' wisdom-life, giving them the right concepts, it may influence their descendants for many generations, since the students will have children and grandchildren in the future. A teacher can teach hundreds or even thousands of students in his lifetime, that is why the teaching career is called the job of "infinite merits" if you perform your duties well. Conversely, if you fail to meet your responsibilities, your future will be bleak. My friends, after listening to what I said, please do not think of giving up your wish to become a teacher out of fear. What is really important? Your intention! Our teaching methods will accumulate gradually with experience and the most important interaction with children is your sincere heart.

In Teaching Students, a Sincere Intention Is Most Important

Let's think for a while: are the students of your first five years of teaching closer to you or the students after your first five years of teaching?

The first five years! (*Audience reply)

That's very strange! In which period of time were your teaching skills better? It must have been the time after five years of teaching! But why were your students closer to you during the first five years? It is because the level of your effort and intention in teaching makes the difference. The first five years, you were always afraid of not teaching them well, so you made a great effort to teach the students. The students would not only see your teaching skills, but more importantly, your teaching attitude would leave a deep impression on them. Perhaps after you have taught for quite a while, your love in teaching would diminish. Even though your teaching skills have improved, the impact given to the students may not be as strong. So, a teacher does not need to worry about lacking in teaching skills. As long as you have a sincere intention, your merits are truly infinite and your future is promising.

Learn to Be a Teacher of Others and Act As a Role Model for Society

As teachers, we must always hold on to this motto, "Learn to be a teacher of others, act as a role model for society." Since teachers require constant learning, they must not stop pursuing morality and wisdom. The ancients said, "Learning is to improve ourselves, while

teaching is to edify others." We should neither stop learning nor give up teaching. Only through learning can we improve ourselves and rectify our bad habits; and only through teaching can we correct the students' perceptions and help them establish the right views in life. If we don't learn, it is very difficult to obtain true wisdom, and if we don't teach, we are not being benevolent and compassionate. Because only through ethical education can we save a person's life from the root. So, we must always improve ourselves and students through teaching and learning. As teachers, we must not put away our books after graduation. Instead, we must learn more actively so as not to disappoint our country's expectation for us. Neither should we let down the parents' trust in us. Most of all, we must not fail to live up to the affinity between us and the students. So, we must "learn to be a teacher of others and act as a role model for society" at all times.

When this female teacher got on the bus and saw the male teachers sitting in the front seats, it was inconvenient for her to criticize them directly. As an adage goes, "With sophisticated skills one can handle interpersonal relationships beautifully everywhere." Using the art of speech, she softened her tone and said to them, "Ladies first! Men please sit at the back!" This way, the male teacher obtained a sense of achievement. We should not criticize others directly but show them a good example. For instance, when an elder teacher got on the bus later, this lady teacher immediately stood up from her seat and said, "Teacher Wu, please take the seat here." This is "demonstrating an example to others." When one person demonstrates a good example, others will give rise to a respectful mind. So, in any group, we must always demonstrate good examples for others to follow.

Be a Good Ancestor Now

Other than seeing this phenomenon on the bus, she also observed her colleagues turn on all the lights in every room as soon as they entered a building when they went on a trip. Why did they do that? Because in their mind, it was free. When money is considered first, people would do a lot of things that would undermine their own blessings.

May I ask, what do you need to keep the lights lit? Electricity. Where does the electricity come from? There are many ways to generate electricity including that of hydroelectric power, and all these methods must consume the earth's energy. The more this generation uses it excessively, the more insufficient the supply will be for the next generation. I often say, "When we look back on human history, which generation will be scolded most fiercely by their following generations?" Which generation?

Our generation! (*Audience reply)

How do you all know?! You can foresee the future, very wise indeed! We can all imagine that people a hundred years later will scold us as such, "How do I have such bad ancestors? What kind of water did they leave to us? Also, what kind of air did they leave to us? How could they leave a broken ozone layer for us? And how could they leave us land polluted by pesticides? It has made our life difficult to even just survive now."

Would you want to become such an ancestor? You see, how did our ancestors of thousands of years treat us? They left the best for us; they left wisdom to us! We must help ourselves to become decent elders and ancestors!

Pleasure Now, Pain Later

This teacher did not blame them directly. She simply turned off the lights for them. As teachers, we must always bear in mind that our speech and behavior should be a good example for students as well as the public.

Many teachers then said, "Isn't it very exhausting for us to be teachers?" Actually, saying such words shows that they have not truly practiced the sages' teachings. Had they genuinely implemented the teachings, they would not have said that, because the sages' teachings would truly let them live a good life. The sages said that we should sit upright! But those people say, "It is so comfortable to tilt to one side when lying on the sofa." Actually, they are only concerned about the comfort of the current moment. In the future, it will lead them to lasting pain. The most common health problems today are associated with bones, such as bone spurs and scoliosis. You may enjoy momentary comfort and suffer from scoliosis later. At that time, you would have to get someone to step and knock on your back as massage therapy and you would howl out in pain.

So, when you live your life genuinely in accordance with these etiquettes, you will enjoy excellent health and a life of ease. When you have internalized these respectful attitudes, you would do them very comfortably and relaxingly without the slightest pretense. On the contrary, when you do not do so and get used to following your habits instead, you will be afraid of becoming embarrassed and will absolutely consume more energy.

Confucius's Signboards

Because they do not understand the truth, people tend to have such misconceptions. It really depends on us to show them wonderful examples, so they would be convinced that people who study the sages' teachings are always beaming with delight and also getting along well with others. We must never display a frosty or sad-looking face after learning the sages' classics, as this will scare people away. We are the signboards of Confucius as well as that of the saints and sages. We must polish this signboard often with the attitude of "turning over a new leaf everyday," so as to foster our morality and wisdom. We should also stimulate people's respectful and benevolent mind by setting a good living example for them. This is about "whether drinking, eating, sitting, or walking, I should let the older ones go first, then the young ones follow behind."

Putting Oneself at the Service of an Elder

The next phrase is "When an elder is calling for someone, I will get that person for him. If that person is not around, I will put myself at the service of this elder."

In ancient times, families were large. When guests came to the house to visit their grandfather or uncle, these guests definitely would not go around the house looking for them. This does not comply with etiquette!

So, as the younger ones, when we meet elders or guests, we should proactively ask, "May I know who you are looking for?" What should this child do if the guests were looking for his uncle? He should go and get his uncle right away and he must not be discourteous to the guests by letting them wait for too long. If this uncle was not around, he should immediately report back, putting himself at the service of the guests and say, "My uncle is

not around. Is there anything I can do for you?" Because it may be that they had come from afar for a purpose. As the saying goes, "One will not visit the temple without a reason." So, there must be a reason for their visit. We should ask, "May I know what the purpose of your visit is? May I take a message for you?"

When a child can handle matters with such manners, would you rest assured when you delegate tasks to him in the future? Yes! You will rest assured! Do not underestimate this etiquette! It represents that, when facing an issue, he will have the attitude of following through. This is called "an attitude of carrying things out from start to finish." By having this attitude, he will not become anxious or impatient easily. This kind of life etiquette fosters children's cultivation. Okay, we will stop here for today, and we shall continue in the next lesson. Thank you!